

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief Lowell M. Porter



Captain Fred Fakkema
Government and Media Relations
(360) 753-5299 – office
(360) 753-5469 – fax
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov>

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**Contact: Trooper Ken Denton, Washington State Patrol Implied Consent Section
(206) 720-3018**

DREs Make a Difference

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) is continuing to be a leader on recognizing drivers under the influence of drugs. Drug Recognition Experts (DREs) are constantly being trained in the detection of drugs other than alcohol by the Patrol. The Patrol's Drug Recognition Expert Program has been training these officers since 1996. A total of 144 police officers from around the state are now DREs, with another 22-person class scheduled for May of 2004.

WSP troopers and sergeants make up 60% of DREs, with the remaining 40% from different allied law enforcement agencies around the state that are committed to making a difference in this program.

The numbers are increasing when it comes to the detection of drugs. In 2001, DREs tested 650 people under the influence of drugs. In 2002, that number increased to 1,048, and in 2003, the numbers are even greater at almost 1,500.

The number of drug screens performed by the State Toxicology Laboratory is also quite impressive. In 2003, 3,219 drugs were detected by the laboratory. These drugs range from all types of drugs, including the most recognized drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

The WSP is also training every officer in the field to recognize symptoms of a drugged driver so they know when to call in a DRE to perform an evaluation. The evaluations are done by the DRE using a blood pressure kit, small flashlights, dark rooms, as well as the more traditional field sobriety test that most of us are familiar with.

The State Patrol would like invite any media personnel to the class beginning on May 17th to get a first-hand view of this program that is absolutely making a difference in the safety of the citizens of the state of Washington. Please contact Trooper Ken Denton at the number above if interested.

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